

## TEACHERS ACTIVITIES



### Theme:

Coming in all sizes, shapes and colors, families are as varied as patchwork quilts with their own special brand of love.

### Topics For Discussion:

Invite students to tell about projects they have worked on with members of their family. Discuss how working together not only helps them complete a project more quickly and efficiently, but can also make a family more closely knit.



Discuss the meaning of this statement Grandma made in the story: "A quilt won't forget. It can tell your life story." How does it apply to the quilt Tanya's family made? Include in the discussion why the grandmother decided to make the quilt.



A quilt is often a family heirloom. Explain "heirloom" to the students. Discuss any heirlooms they might know about within their own families. Have them ask their parents about family heirlooms and invite them to share what they find out.

### Curriculum Extension Activities:

Discuss with students why a year (to make the quilt) seemed like a long time to Tanya, but not to her grandmother. Brainstorm with students a list of things that could possibly take place in a year.



Obtain a copy of *Tanya's Reunion*, the sequel to *The Patchwork Quilt*, and continue the story of Tanya's family with the students. In this book, Tanya visits the old family farm and learns more about her family's history through her grandmother's stories of the past.

Obtain some photographs of quilts, such as those found on calendars and in quilt books, so that students may see the enormous variety in the patterns and colors used in making quilts. Invite families to bring a quilt to school. Ask students to notice the differences among applique, embroidered, and patchwork quilts. Discuss the patterns, shapes, and evidence of symmetry they see in both patches and stitching. Have them look for quilt blocks, or squares, and notice how they are formed and how they fit together. Some of the family quilts may have stories to go with them—allow time for sharing these stories.



Invite a quilter into the classroom to do a demonstration. Have this person show the stages in the process, e.g., deciding on a pattern and colors, cutting pieces, fitting them together and stitching, assembling quilt blocks into a larger piece, the use of the cotton batting, and the actual quilting.



Make a paper quilt featuring students and their grandparents. Cut construction paper squares (5 x 5 inches). Have students draw a picture of some activity they enjoy doing with their grandparents (or other older relative) on their individual squares. Also have them write a caption for the picture that tells about the activity. Arrange the squares on a colored paper background, glue in place, and display the finished “quilt” in the classroom.



Ask for donations of all sorts of scraps of fabric. Have students sort pieces of fabric according to color, texture of material, pattern or design in the cloth (e.g., stripes, plaid, flowered, etc.), and other categories they might think of on their own. After this classification activity with the fabric pieces, have students think of some colors, patterns, and shapes that might go well together. Invite someone who sews to show the students how they can stitch the pieces together into a “crazy quilt.” (Work with a size that can be made into a wall hanging for the classroom.) After the students finish their quilt top, have someone who knows how to make a simple quilt (such as a tie quilt) help them add the backing. Display the finished quilt.



From the fabric scraps, have students select a scrap that has a definite design or pattern. Glue the scrap on a piece of paper that is twice the size of the fabric. Have students use crayons to continue the pattern or design of the fabric on the paper.

Have students save their school lunch milk containers (rinse thoroughly and wash with soap). Use the containers for milk carton structures (mini-versions of the milk carton house that LeVar shows in the program). Encourage students to use their imaginations in their creations.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:**

THE JOSEFINA STORY QUILT

by Eleanor Coerr, illus. by Bruce Degen (HarperCollins)

TEXAS STAR

by Barbara Hancock Cole, illus. by Barbara Minton (Orchard)

LUKA'S QUILT

by Georgia Guback (Greenwillow)

SWEET CLARA AND THE FREEDOM QUILT

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SELINA AND THE BEAR PAW QUILT  
by Barbara Smucker, illus. by Janet Wilson (Crown)

SEWING QUILTS  
by Ann Turner, illus. by Thomas B. Allen (Macmillan)

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## Description:

Using scraps cut from the family's old clothing, a young girl learns the secret ingredient in her grandma's special quilt of memories.

LeVar visits the Boston Children's Museum, where he discovers kids making their own brightly-colored patchwork quilts. Then he explores how three generations of an Italian American family work together in their food store making mozzarella cheese and meatballs that are store specialties.



### Social Studies Concepts:

- ◆ **history**
- ◆ **culture**
- ◆ **family**
- ◆ **community**



## Classroom Activities:

### History

Discuss how years ago our ancestors not only made their own clothing, candles, and soap, but also had to make their own bedding. They often used pieces of leftover fabric or scraps of cloth from clothing that was no longer worn. These pieces would be stitched together to make a new top for a worn blanket or coverlet. This process is called quilting and today many people consider quilting an art form. Bring samples of quilts or display books of quilts for students to examine. Ask students to pick out their favorite designs and tell why they like them.

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### History/Culture

Invite a quilt maker to share the history, and explain the process of quilting. Ask them to talk about traditional patterns and colors, including the distinctive look and colors of Amish quilts. Urge them to bring samples of their work and if possible do a demonstration. Extend this experience by engaging students in cutting swatches of material to create pillows for the class reading corner or to make miniature wall hangings. Solicit parent volunteers to help students sew the patches together.

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### Family

Discuss how Tanya's mama and grandma taught her more than how to sew – they showed her the secret ingredient to making a quilt is love. Love and caring are ingredients that make families special. Have students draw a picture of their family engaged in an activity that demonstrates their love for one another. Display the pictures and talk about them.

**Family**

Have each student create a list of activities they do as a family, such as going to church, to the park, swimming, eating a meal and so on. As students share their lists, compile them into a class list. Continue by discussing how families sometimes share hobbies. Ask students to describe a family hobby or a family collection.

**Family**

Have a "Hobby/Collection Fair" so students can display samples of their family's hobby or collection. Invite family members to attend the fair and share how the hobbies or collections got started.

**Community**

Each community has unique characteristics that set it apart. Talk about what makes your community special. Then, as a class, create a miniature model of your community, using small boxes and paper sacks, construction paper, clay and other materials. Have students make paper or pipe cleaner people that represents them and their family members. Ask students to place these in the model to show where they enjoy being together as a family in the community.

**Community**

Invite a local historian, or a longtime community member, to talk about how the community was founded and how it has developed over the years.

**Do-At-Home Activity:**

**Time Together**

Encourage parents to spend time creating something with their child -- like making supper, baking cookies, building a birdhouse, and so on.

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The following activities involve working with quilts and are designed to take place over a period of several days:

- *Creating patterns.*** Using two different colors of construction paper, make a four-patch quilt block. Give each student a four-by-four inch square of paper and two squares that are two-by-two inches. Discuss how they can arrange the smaller squares into a checkerboard pattern on the larger square. When they are satisfied with their arrangement, they can glue the smaller squares in place. Then, discuss how these squares can be arranged to form a quilt. How many squares do they have altogether? How many rows can they make with their squares to make the shape of a quilt? (For example, there may be 33 squares, and students might figure out that 11 rows of 3 squares each will work. However, they will likely not want that shape for a quilt.) If they cannot arrive at the shape they want with the squares they have, what can they do to make the quilt they want? After they have decided on the number of rows and the number of squares in each row, they need to consider how they can arrange the squares to maintain the checkerboard pattern. Once they have achieved the pattern, they may glue the squares in place on a large piece of roll-type paper. Have the children use colorful markers to put their names in the squares they made.

Using the same four-patch quilt block as in the previous activity, work with large squares of a solid color and small squares of two different prints (gift wrap works well). After the students have completed their individual blocks, discuss how they might arrange them in a repeated pattern. They need not adhere to the checkerboard this time, but can manipulate the blocks to form other patterns. When they are satisfied with a pattern, they may glue their blocks on a piece of large paper. (Note: In both of the four-patch activities, fractions of one-half and one-fourth can be introduced. For example, in the four-patch, half of the squares are print. Another name for half is two-fourths.)

Have students work with pre-cut shapes in solid colors and prints to make quilt blocks in their choice of these patterns: Churn Dash, Maple Leaf, Old Tippecanoe, and Windmill. (These four patterns are described in further detail in *Eight Hands Round: A Patchwork Alphabet* by Ann Whitford Paul. See the following pages for outlines of these patterns.) Encourage them to use the names of the shapes to discuss their arrangement of the pattern. Have them choose a complementary color for a background and decide how they want to place the individual quilt blocks.

The ideal culminating activity, if possible, is for students to create their own quilt block, much like LeVar and the children did in the **Reading Rainbow** program. Fabric crayons or gluing and sewing fabric scraps and trims are possible materials for making the blocks. The idea for the quilt blocks could be related to a classroom community “theme” or focus on the children as individuals. Parent volunteers might be called upon to help prepare the fabric squares (i.e., machine stitch around the edge so that it doesn’t fray) before the children work on them, demonstrate stitching, and help assemble the blocks into the actual quilt.

- **Finding patterns.** Look at a few quilts. What differences do the students notice among applique, embroidered, and patchwork quilts? What patterns do they see? Are any of the patterns symmetrical? What shapes do they see, both in the patches and in the stitching? What shapes do they see most often in the *patchwork* quilts? How many quilt blocks, or squares, are in the quilt? How were the squares formed? Pictures of quilts, such as those found in quilt calendars and books, are useful for showing the enormous variety in quilt block patterns.

- **Problem solving.** In the program, LeVar explains how to construct the milk carton “house.” Collect half-gallon milk cartons and design a structure that is big enough for one or two children to go inside. This might be designated as a place for quiet reading, alone or with a friend. Have the students build and “decorate” the house.

# Do-At-Home Activity

- **Cooking something from an old family recipe.** Children should be involved from the onset of the activity, including choosing what they will make. Encourage parents to discuss the math in the preparation with their children, including measuring the ingredients, the time or number of strokes needed for mixing, cooking temperature, and cooking or baking time. If parents are willing to share their recipes, invite them to send the recipe to school and compile the recipes into a class book of "Favorite Family Recipes." Have the children write a personal note on their recipe about its origin.

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# Fabulous Fabrics



**Key Words:** fabrics, observations, senses, textures

**Concept:** Fabrics have many different characteristics.

In the book *The Patchwork Quilt*, Grandma carefully collected samples of fabric that reminded her of people and events. Her family was also able to recognize individual quilt pieces in the completed quilt. Fabrics have many different characteristics such as color, pattern, texture, and weight. Consider what fabrics, based on their characteristics, are good for making a rag doll.

**Materials:** Clean fabric scraps in a variety of colors and textures that have been cut into squares that are about 8" x 8", hand lenses, chart paper, yarn or string, scissors, cotton balls, markers, pre-made sample rag doll (see last step for directions).

1. Give each group of students a collection of fabric samples, which includes at least 3 samples for each student. Some of the samples can be from the same fabric.
2. Ask them to name ways their fabric samples are different. Record their responses on chart paper. At first they may focus on differences in color or pattern. Encourage them to touch the fabrics to discover characteristics like texture, weight, ability to stretch and to allow light through.
3. Give them hand lenses and ask them to look at ways the threads or fibers in the fabrics are different. These might include size, weave, texture, and number. Record these on a chart.
4. Show students the rag doll, and discuss with them the fact that people have been using scraps of fabric to make rag dolls, like they've made patchwork quilts, for many years. In this activity they will have a chance to make a rag doll which they can keep or give as a gift.

5. Have students select two fabric samples for their doll. Encourage them to think about all the ways the fabrics are different as they make their selection.

6. Have them follow these steps for making their rag doll:

- **Head:** place three cotton balls in the center of an 8" x 8" piece of fabric and fold the fabric up around the cotton balls. Tie yarn around the fabric to make a neck.

- **Arms:** fold another piece of 8" x 8" fabric in half. Roll up the fabric starting at one of the smaller ends. Tie yarn around both ends of the fabric roll. (If the fabric is thick, cut it in half to make a 4" x 8" rectangle, and roll up one of the halves to make an 8" long fabric roll for the arms.)

- **Body:** gather the fabric under the doll's head into two narrow bunches. Center the arms under the doll's neck between the two bunches of gathered fabric. Pull the gathered fabric down over the arms, then tie yarn around the fabric to hold the arms in place and to make the doll's waist.

7. Use markers to draw the face and for other details.

**Extension:** Students can use fabric scraps to make hats, aprons, vests, etc. for their dolls.

## Getting the Paint In

**Key Words:** fabrics, absorption, water

**Concept:** Fabrics absorb water at different rates.

Fabrics can vary in many ways—texture, weight, colors, patterns. Another way fabrics vary is by their ability to absorb water. Cotton is very water absorbent, while nylon is not. The type of fabric, the tightness of the weave, and the texture determine how well a fabric will take in a water-based dye. One reason cotton fabrics come in so many wonderful colors, is that cotton accepts dye well.

**Materials:** Scraps of solid colored fabrics in a variety of textures and weights, plastic cups, rubber bands, eye droppers, stop watches or watches with a second hand, paper and pencils, water-based tempera paint, shallow bowls, sponges, potatoes, table knives, newspapers, paper towels.

1. Give small groups of students several fabric samples to test for water absorbency. They will use the results from these tests to predict which samples best accept water-based paint for making repeated prints on the fabric.
2. Have students place one of the samples over the top of a cup and secure it with a rubber band. Using an eyedropper, have them place a drop of water on the cloth and time how long it takes for the water to be absorbed into the fabric. After they record a description of this fabric and the absorption time, have them repeat the procedure for each of their fabric samples. (*Fabrics that quickly absorb water are called hydrophilic meaning water loving. Fabrics that repel water are hydrophobic or water hating.*)
3. Based on their absorption data, have students make predictions about which fabrics will work well for printing. Ask them to sequence the fabrics from best to worst. Are there any similar characteristics among the absorbent fabric? Among the non-absorbent fabrics? Does it seem to matter whether the fabrics are old or new? (*New fabrics are treated to make them water and stain resistant. Washing removes this treatment.*)
4. Have students create a potato stamp by cutting the end off potatoes, and cutting a design into the flat, smooth surface.
5. Create prints by pressing the potato stamp onto a paint-soaked sponge, and pressing the stamp onto the fabric. Have them try stamping the fabric several times. Does the fabric absorb the paint well? Was their prediction correct? Have them do this on all their samples. Then have them select a fabric that accepts the paint well and use the stamp to make a patterned cloth for display.

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